


BALTIMORE SPEECH
1864

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Late Addresses of Abraham Lincoln, 1861-1865

Baltimore Speech
April 18, 1864

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN — Calling to mind that we are in Baltimore, we cannot fail to note that the world moves. Looking upon these many people, assembled here, to serve, as they best may, the soldiers of the Union, it occurs at once that three years ago, the same soldiers could not so much as pass through Baltimore. The change from then till now, is both great and gratifying. Blessings on the brave men who have wrought the change, and the fair women who strive to reward them for it.

But Baltimore suggests more than could happen within Baltimore. The change within Baltimore is part only of a far wider change. When the war began, three years ago, neither party, nor any man, expected it would last till now. Each looked for the end, in some way, long ere to-day. Neither did any anticipate that domestic slavery would be much affected by the war. But here we are; the war has not ended, and slavery has been much affected—how much needs not now to be recounted. So true is it that man proposes, and God disposes.

But we can see the past, though we may not claim to have directed it; and seeing it, in this case, we feel more hopeful and confident for the future.

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labors. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name—liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny.

The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as a liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one. Plainly the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails to-day among us human creatures, even in the North, and all professing to love liberty. Hence we behold the processes by which thousands are daily passing from under the yoke of bondage, hailed by some as the advancer of

liberty, and bewailed by others as the destruction of all liberty. Recently, as it seems, the people of Maryland have been doing something to define liberty; and thanks to them that, in what they have done, the wolf's dictionary has been repudiated.

It is not very becoming for one in my position to make speeches at great length; but there is another subject upon which I feel that I ought to say a word. A painful rumor, true I fear, has reached us of the massacre, by the rebel forces, at Fort Pillow, in the West end of Tennessee, on the Mississippi river, of some three hundred colored soldiers and white officers, who had just been overpowered by their assailants. There seems to be some anxiety in the public mind whether the government is doing its duty to the colored soldier, and to the service, at this point. At the beginning of the war, and for some time, the use of colored troops was not contemplated; and how the change of purpose was wrought, I will not now take time to explain. Upon a clear conviction of duty I resolved to turn that element of strength to account; and I am responsible for it to the American people, to the Christian world, to history, and on my final account, to God. Having determined to use the Negro as a soldier, there is no way but to give him all the protection given to any other soldier. The difficulty is not in stating the principle, but in practically applying it. It is a mistake to suppose the government is indifferent to this matter, or is not doing the best it can in regard to it. We do not to-day know that a colored soldier, or white officer commanding colored soldiers, has been massacred by the rebels when made a prisoner. We fear it, believe it, I may say, but we do not know it. To take the life of one of their prisoners, on the assumption that they murder ours, when it is short of certainty that they do murder ours, might be too serious, too cruel a mistake. We are having the Fort Pillow affair thoroughly investigated; and such investigations will probably show conclusively how the truth [stands]. If, after all that has been said, it shall turn out that there has been no massacre at Fort Pillow, it will be almost safe to say there has been none, and will be none elsewhere. If there has been the massacre of three hundred there, or even the tenth part of three hundred, it will be conclusively proved; and being so proved, the retribution shall as surely come. It will be matter of grave consideration in what exact course to apply the retribution; but in the supposed case, it must come.

Remarks on Liberty: *by Abraham Lincoln*

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty; and the American people just now are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name, liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny.

The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act, as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one. Plainly, the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails today among us human creatures, even in the North, and all professing to live liberty. Hence we behold the process by which thousands are daily passing from under the yoke of bondage hailed by some as the advance of liberty, and bewailed by others as the destruction of all liberty. Recently, as it seems, the people of Maryland have been doing something to define liberty, and thanks to them that, in what they have done, the wolf's dictionary has been repudiated.—From an address at Baltimore, Md., April 12, 1864.

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1003

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

June 28, 1948

LINCOLN'S BALTIMORE SPEECH ON LIBERTY

Many years ago, on July 16, 1934, to be exact, Lincoln Lore published a list of twenty-five addresses which had been generally accepted as the outstanding productions in Abraham Lincoln's oratorical repertoire. We must admit that no consideration was given to the speech that he made at the Baltimore Sanitary Fair on April 18, 1864, and it is seldom named as one of the outstanding speeches of Lincoln's career.

However, those in charge of collecting rare documents which were to be exhibited on the Freedom Train chose the Baltimore Address as one of the important manuscripts. It was published in full in the book *Heritage of Freedom* with the subtitle, "The History and Significance of the Basic Documents of American Liberty."

It has been thought best to in some measure compensate for overlooking the important address in the compilation published so many years ago by printing the address in full. It is another one of those brief compositions of the President, containing less than a thousand words.

Ladies and Gentlemen—

Calling to mind that we are in Baltimore, we can not fail to note that the world moves. Looking upon these many people, assembled here, to serve, as they best may, the soldiers of the Union, it occurs at once that three years ago the same soldiers could not so much as pass through Baltimore. The change from then till now, is both great, and gratifying. Blessings on the brave men who have wrought the change, and the fair women who strive to reward them for it.

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It is not very becoming for one in my position to make speeches at great length; but there is another subject upon which I feel that I ought to say a word. A painful rumor, true I fear, has reached us on the massacre, by the rebel forces, at Fort Pillow, in the west end of Tennessee, on the Mississippi river, of some three hundred colored soldiers and white officers, who had just been overpowered by their assailants. There seems to be some anxiety in the public mind whether the government is doing its duty to the colored soldier, and to the service, at this point. At the beginning of the war, and for some time, the use of colored troops was not contemplated; and how the change of purpose was wrought, I will not now take time to explain. Upon a clear conviction of duty I resolved to turn that element of strength to account; and I am responsible for it to the American people, to the Christian world, to history, and on my final account, to God. Having determined to use the negro as a soldier, there is no way but to give him all the protection given to any other soldier. The difficulty is not in stating the principle, but in practically applying it. It is a mistake to suppose the government is indifferent (sic) to this matter, or is not doing the best it can in regard to it. We do not to-day know that a colored soldier, or white officer commanding colored soldiers, has been massacred by the rebels when made a prisoner. We fear it, believe it, I may say, but we do not know it. To take the life of one of their prisoners, on the assumption that they murder ours, when it is short of certainty that they do murder ours, might be too serious, too cruel a mistake. We are having the Fort-Pillow affair thoroughly investigated: and such investigation will probably show conclusively how the truth is. If, after all that has been said, it shall turn out that there has been no massacre at Fort-Pillow, it will be almost safe to say there has been none, and will be none elsewhere. If there has been the massacre of three hundred there, or even the tenth part of three hundred, it will be conclusively proved; and being so proved, the retribution shall as surely come. It will be matter of grave consideration in what exact course to apply the retribution; but in the supposed case, it must come.

A BRAHAM LINCOLN'S experiences with Baltimore had little to do with terrapin, Madeira or oysters. When he passed through Baltimore on his way to Washington on February 22, 1861, the Pinkerton men considered it necessary to send him through the town at night after announcing that the President-elect was to go through the city on a later train. As Pinkerton wrote, "the city was in profound repose when we passed through. Darkness and silence reigned over all. Perhaps, at this moment, however, the restless conspirators were astir, perfecting their plans for a tragedy as infamous as any which has ever disgraced a free country."

However that may have been, "men of wealth and respectability" were, according to Carl Sandburg, on hand at the Calvert Station later in the day to greet the train in which Lincoln was expected to ride. "Also," adds Sandburg, "the gang fighter and tough, known as 'the Baltimore plug-ugly,' also teamsters, tailors, mechanics, clerks, barbers, cooks, dishwashers." They cheered Jefferson Davis and booed Lincoln and, presumably, read with delight the hoax news story that he had gone through Baltimore disguised as a Scottish highlander in kilts.

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Three years later, when the tide of the war had turned but few knew it, Mr. Lincoln visited Baltimore again, this time to make an address at a Sanitary Fair, which was the 1864 version of a Red Cross drive. His address on that occasion is reprinted on this page (part of the original being reproduced by courtesy of its owner, A. S. W. Rosenbach). Then, as now, the people were surprised that the war had lasted so long. Few of them realized that the industrial superiority of the North had begun to tell and that they were just entering the final year of the struggle.

Instead, the North was in a frenzy of indignation over the "Fort Pillow Massacre" which had occurred at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, just a week before Lincoln's Baltimore speech.

At Fort Pillow, Confederate soldiers under General Forrest surprised a Union garrison manned by Negro troops under white officers. The place was stormed and, while versions of what took place differ, it is clear that all but a few of the Negroes were killed. The North was incensed, extremists demanding that Southern prisoners be shot as hostages. Lincoln's reference to the Fort Pillow incident seems to have been an effort to calm public opinion while assuring punishment of somebody. Later on, the victories of Grant and Sherman satisfied the taste for revenge, and Fort Pillow was forgotten.

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Study of this Baltimore speech reveals it as one of Lincoln's best. His analysis of the conflicting definitions of liberty, which one man regards as his right to do as he pleases, while another insists on

the liberty of keeping other men as slaves, was adroit. His observation of the manner in which "war aims" are modified by the events of war—so that slavery, which was not an issue when the war began, had already been affected—is typical Lincolnian thinking. It did not sit well with the abolitionists, but it stands the test of time and the historian.

Perhaps the Lincoln who will be best understood in this hour of apprehension is the newly inaugurated President who, in the grim days between the fall of Sumter and the arrival of troops to defend Washington, said to visitors: "I don't believe there is any North. The Seventh Regiment is a myth. Rhode Island is not known in our geography any longer." There were suaver, slicker, more presentable, pompous and violent men than Abraham Lincoln in Washington who would not have given out that cry of desperation. But today, on the one hundred and thirty-third birthday of Abraham Lincoln, Americans can understand it—all the more—because the first flush of over confidence has passed.

That we may strive to emulate Lincoln's fortitude in adversity, patience with fools, will to win and generosity in victory might well be an American resolve for Lincoln's birthday.. F. N.

Lincoln's Baltimore Address

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. There are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name—liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny.

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Abraham Lincoln's Baltimore Address

Everybody's heard of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address . . .

But do you know of his Baltimore Address?

Time you did, what with Lincoln's Birthday coming up next Tuesday. In his Baltimore Address, Lincoln defined Liberty—and his words have great meaning today, just as they did back on April 18, 1864, when he spoke in Baltimore at the Fair of the Sanitary Commission.

The original manuscript of his speech, to be exhibited Feb. 9 to 16 at the Maryland Historical Society—a place you should visit often—declares:

"We all declare for liberty but in using the same word we do not mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor.

Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things called by the same name—Liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny."

In another section of his speech Lincoln says, "Hence we behold the processes by which thousands are daily passing from under the yoke of bondage, hailed by some as the advance of liberty, and bewailed by others as the destruction of all liberty."



Lincoln Address Returns

By JAMES H. BREADY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S manuscript for the only speech he gave in Baltimore is back in this city. There is a slender chance that it will stay here.

This week the manuscript will be on public view at the Maryland Historical Society in an unusual, doubly motivated exhibition. Tuesday is in mind, of course—Lincoln's birthday. But of even greater moment is the fact that the document is on sale.

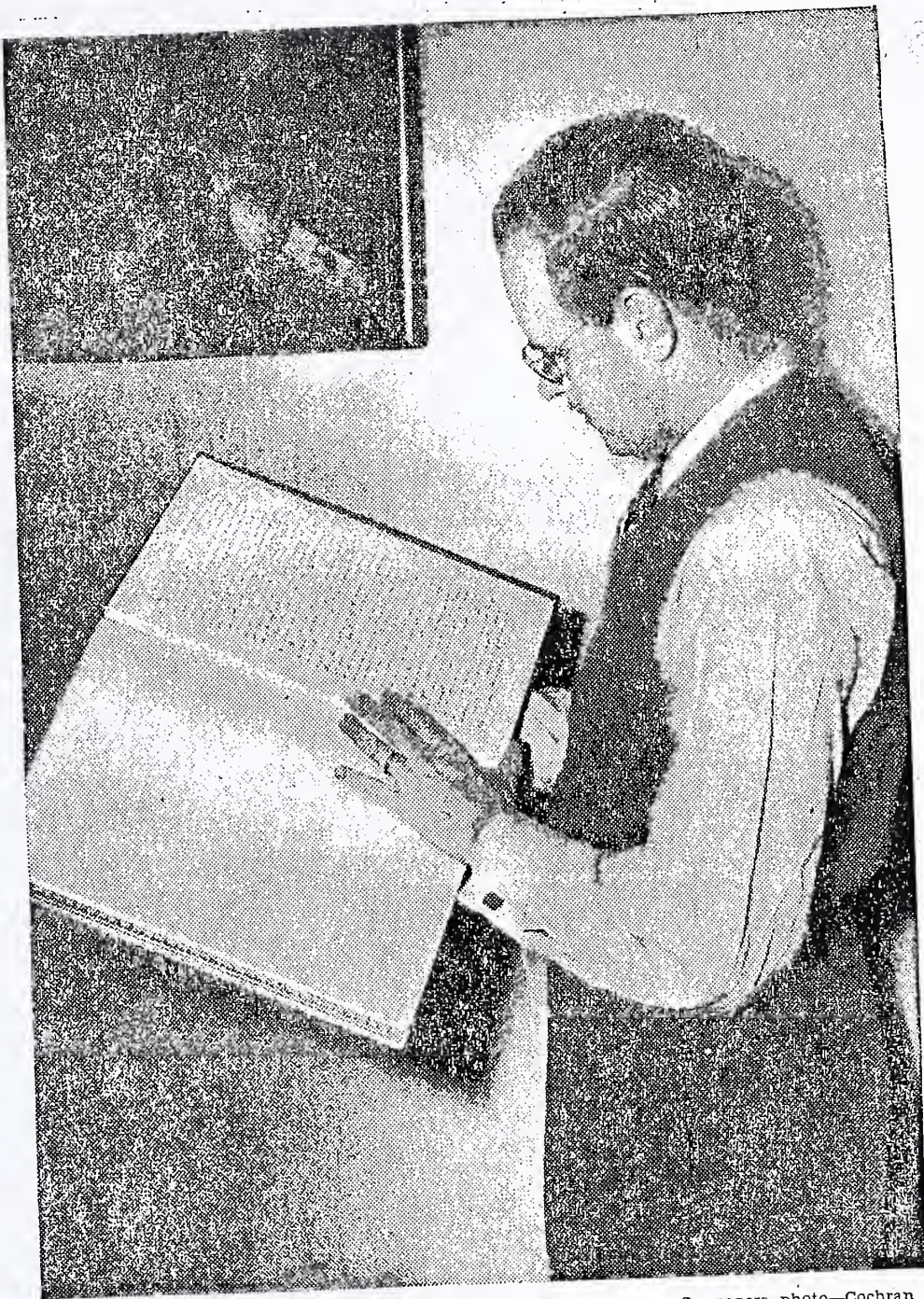
The announced price is \$37,500, a whopping sum nearly as large as the society's entire annual budget. The society's governing council is hoping, however, that with or without public commotion, a Baltimorean or Baltimoreans will undertake to buy the manuscript, so that it may remain permanently in what James W. Foster, director of the society, calls "the city where it belongs."

Carried On Freedom Train

Lincoln's speech, beautifully mounted and in excellent condition, was one of the 115 "basic documents of American liberty" that passed through Baltimore in 1947 aboard the Freedom Train. Otherwise, it has not been in Baltimore since the occasion of its delivery, on Monday, April 18, 1864.

Late that afternoon, President Lincoln arrived from Washington via the Baltimore and Ohio, and was conveyed by carriage from Camden Station to the old main building of the Maryland Institute on Market place. It was opening night of a week-long fair organized by the United States Sanitary Commission, the principal civilian welfare organization aiding the Grand Army of the Republic.

Thousands of persons jammed the "im-



Sunpapers photo—Cochran
Librarian Fred Shelley of the Maryland Historical Society examines a treasure that is temporarily in his care: The manuscript of Lincoln's Sanitary Fair Address.

mense salon" of the institute, *The Sun* reported, and greeted the "towering figure" of the speaker with "a waving of handkerchiefs and continuous cheers."

Guest Register To Be Shown

They also followed the lead of the President and his wife by signing a formal guest register. Containing practically a roll call of eminent persons in Civil War Washington and Baltimore, this book of autographs will also be on display at the historical society the next six days, from 9 to 5 o'clock.

The book is being lent by the Johns Hopkins University Library, to which it was presented in 1940 after being bought at auction. This exhibit will be its first since that year. The names of Secretary of State Seward, Postmaster General Blair, Speaker of the House Colfax and Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace adorn it, alongside the signatures of such staunch Baltimore champions of the Union cause as Gov. Augustus W. Bradford, Johns Hopkins, Enoch Pratt and John W. Garrett.

Lincoln's address itself, composed before the era of ghost writers and speech conferences and drafted before the invention of typewriters, is in the President's clear hand and shows even occasional word changes. It fills several pages, on one side only.

Ranks With Greatest Speeches

In years since, the Sanitary Fair speech has taken rank beside Lincoln's Cooper Union address, his debates with Douglas, his inaugurals and even the Gettysburg Address. Two passages in it are especially esteemed. One relates to liberty:

"The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are in want of one." Lincoln's approach was to contrast freedom with tyranny: The man who would "do as he pleases with himself" and men whose idea of liberty is to "do as they please with other men."

"We all declare for liberty," Lincoln remarked, "but in using the same word, we do not all mean the same thing."

Tries To Cool Indignation

The second matter that disturbed the President was the Fort Pillow massacre, in western Tennessee, the week before. Six thousand Confederates under Maj. Gen. Nathan B. Forrest, reducing a garrison of 600 white and Negro troops, then murdered 400 of their prisoners, officers and men both, in what is still a blot upon the Rebel record.

The North clamored for retribution in kind. But President Lincoln, in a fine demonstration of restraint, urged Baltimoreans, and the nation, to hold their feelings in check until the incident could be fully investigated.

After speaking, the President shook hands with well-wishers, was cheered ("our next President!") and toured the exhibits. Then he was driven to the Mount Vernon place home of William J. Albert, president of the men's committee for the fair. This building, at 702 Cathedral street, still stands. About 100 years old, it is now the Third Church of Christ Scientist. Here Abraham Lincoln spent his only night in Baltimore.

Before he could get to bed, however, there

was a "levee" in his honor, with the visiting dignitaries joined by such local celebrities as John Pendleton Kennedy and Brantz Mayer—who was soon to be president of the Maryland Historical Society.

At 10 A.M. the next day, a special train took the presidential party back to Washington.

The following Monday, John Hay, a private secretary to Lincoln, wrote the chairman of a similar Sanitary Commission fair to be held in Philadelphia, saying that he was enclosing the original manuscript of the President's Baltimore speech, to be sold to help the proceeds. (Hay's letter, also, will be on display at the society). Bought by a Philadelphian, the manuscript and Hay's letter ultimately passed into the possession of Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, collector and dealer, who is the present seller.

Similarly, for the Baltimore fair, Lincoln wrote out his Gettysburg Address, given the previous November, in what proved to be his final, finest copy. It stayed in Baltimore in private ownership until 1949, when it was auctioned in New York to a Cuban for \$54,000.

Katz Hopes It Will Remain

"Our failure to do anything about keeping the Gettysburg Address in Baltimore until it was too late, makes it all the more vital to do something about regaining the Sanitary Fair address before some New York or Chicago Lincoln collector grabs it," said Joseph Katz, bibliophile and historical society member who was largely instrumental in bringing the manuscript here for display.

"The world at large," he added, "calls Abraham Lincoln the greatest man this nation has produced so far. Yet here in the so-called Monumental City there isn't even a statute to him."

"This manuscript would be cheaper than a statute, and it would command more attention. I join Mr. Foster in hoping that somehow it can be bought and kept here."

